

CASE OF TWINS.

QUESTION OF PRIMOGENITURE.

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(Reprinted from the Medical Times & Gazette, August 24, 1861.)

THE following case appears to me not unworthy of record, on account of its rarity and its relation to obstetrico-legal Medicine:—

July 12, 1861.—This morning, at four o'clock, I was hastily summoned to attend Mrs. ———, who was reported to be in labour. On my arrival, my patient at once informed me that she had, twenty minutes previously, given birth to twins, when quite alone,—her husband being away in search of the nurse, there was no one present to render any assistance. On examination I found two fine healthy male children lying struggling under the bed-clothes. From their position it was impossible to determine or decide which of the two was born first. Both infants were lying on their backs, and equidistant from the vulva, with their heads directed towards the foot of the bed; from which latter circumstance I inferred that the presentation was in both instances natural. I divided the cords (both of which were greatly on the stretch) and removed the placentæ. No satisfactory inference or conclusion as to the seniority of the infants could be drawn from a careful examination of the placentæ, as regards situation or position. The patient states that the one child was expelled almost immediately after the other, but is entirely ignorant as to which of them was first born, although she presumes that the larger of the two must necessarily, from the difference in size, be the oldest. The mother has made an excellent recovery, and both children are in the way of well-doing. This patient stated to me, a month prior to her confinement, her impression that she would give birth to twins.

Remarks.—In the foregoing case it will be observed, that the patient gave birth to twin male children when alone and by herself. In connexion with such an occurrence, the question naturally suggests itself, Which of these two children is the oldest? In this case the determination of such a point, supposing it were possible, is a matter of comparatively little moment. Such an event, however, occurring under circumstances involving a title (as in the peerage, for example, or succession to an estate, property, etc.), would assuredly lead to great difficulty and embarrassment.

